

# The Dirty Disposal Debate



## Objective

To teach students about some of the environmental, social, and economic issues surrounding modern landfills.



## Activity Description

Students will research and debate the pros and cons of using landfills for trash disposal.



## Materials Needed

- Two 3- by 5-inch note cards for each student
- Internet, library, or encyclopedia access



## Key Vocabulary Words

Landfill  
Leachate  
Ground water  
Tipping fees  
Decomposition  
Methane



## Duration

Day 1: 1 hour  
Day 2: 1 hour



## Skills Used

Research  
Reading  
Problem solving  
Communication



## Activity

### Day 1

**Step 1:** Introduce the concept of the modern landfill and explain some of the advantages and disadvantages to this form of trash disposal. (Refer to the Teacher Fact Sheet titled *Landfills* on page 155 for background information and see the sidebar for helpful hints.)

**Step 2:** Hand out two note cards to each student and have them label one “Benefits” and the other “Concerns.”

**Step 3:** As a homework assignment or an in-class group activity, have students conduct research and come up with one benefit and one disadvantage associated with landfills to write on their note cards. Encourage students

## A Look at Landfills

### Pros

- Gives us somewhere to put our trash.
- Is more sanitary than dumps of the past.
- Can generate methane gas that can be captured and used for energy.
- Can be capped and used for park land, playgrounds, even building sites.

### Cons

- Causes loose garbage to be blown around.
- Can attract birds and pests.
- Can cause a lot of noise and traffic with trucks driving in and out.
- Has the potential to leak and contaminate ground water and soil.
- Can cause sinkage problems for builders who use capped landfills as foundations.



social  
studies



language  
arts



science



### Journal Activity

Ask students to think about the advantages and disadvantages associated with landfills. Which one issue is *most important* to them? Why?

to use the school library, Internet, and adults as resources.

#### Day 2

**Step 1:** The next day, divide students into two groups. One group will use its note cards on the benefits of landfills and the other group will use their note cards on the concerns associated with landfills. Next, give each group 10 minutes to work together and prepare a debate on either the pros or cons of landfills. In those 10 minutes, ask the students to combine their note cards and assemble them in order of importance for easy reference during the debate. Instruct students to pick four classmates to represent the group as the debaters.

**Step 2:** Explain that each team will get 4 minutes to present their side of the debate. During that time, any of the four designated debaters for that team can speak, but they must take turns. After one side presents, the other team has 4 minutes to argue their points.

**Step 3:** After the debate, have the class discuss who had stronger points and why.



### Assessment

1. Ask the students to decide whether or not they would want a landfill in their community. Why?
2. Have students list, from memory, three to four benefits and concerns associated with landfills.



### Enrichment

1. Have students create a survey and conduct interviews with family members or friends to determine how other people feel about landfills. Compile, analyze, and discuss the results of the surveys in class. Make graphs or charts based on these results.
2. Take a field trip to a local landfill. Have kids tour the facility and learn how it works. When you return, have students write a paragraph on their visit, including five new facts about landfills that they learned.